A Butler in the Ranch House?

Retail Center will bring retail convenience to Willow Park

WILLOW PARK — Fort Worth-based Butler Commercial Reality plans to develop a retail center around the city's soon-to-be-completed Winn-Dixie.

The center will be called Ranch House Plaza.

Plans for the center include a fast food restaurant, a bank, a dry cleaners and several spaces the company has designated as an insurance sales center or real estate offices, according to Butler's Janet Powers, CCIM, and James Blake, CCIM, who are handling marketing for the center.

"This is a new focus for us," Powers said. "When we found out the Winn-Dixie was under construction (in Willow Park), we thought there would be a need for a neighborhood retail development to go with it. There's a real gap in services out there. We are trying to put people in the center who will provide the services that so many are having to drive into town to get now."

The center will be about 20,000 square feet, with pad sites of 22,000 to 40,000-square feet, according to Powers. "We've already met with Winn-Dixie and they're real excited about it," she said. "We're designing the center to match the Winn-Dixie."

Powers and Blake are already marketing the center to potential users.

"I'm glad to see that we're involved out there. We've gotten strong interest," Blake said. "We've gotten excellent response from retailers to office users to local banks and fast-food restaurants. Tied in with the Winn-Dixie, I think it will be a much-needed center."

A preliminary study of Willow Park demographics gave Butler staff members optimism that the development would be as welcome by city residents as well as the possible tenants. Their theory has been validated over the last few weeks.

"We're really thrilled with the response we're getting from the inline retail people," Powers said. "Everybody seems to be very pleased. Not only are we getting great feedback from potential users, but the city's residents are excited about it."

When asked why marketing for the center has netted fast results, both Blake and Powers pointed to Willow Park's impressive demographics.

"We saw the things that had happened along Main Street in Weatherford and now the Winn-Dixie," Blake said. "Income and growth levels in Parker County are impressive. Some interesting stats: 75 percent of the people within a five mile radius (of the center) commute from 12 to 44 minutes to work. I have quite a few friends who have moved out that way, to Weatherford, Aledo and Willow Park. I don't think there's a lot of room to do multiple centers, but I think this one will be highly successful."

The Willow Park growth trend is driven by and for professionals who want a piece of the quiet life in the country, Blake said.

According to Blake, average household incomes of about $75,000 annually make Willow Park as attractive to retailers as the Aledo Independent School System is to professionals with children.

Within a one-mile radius of the center, the average housing price is $115,095.

"I think the retail center will substantially contribute to the economy of city," said Guy Natale, Willow Park's City Manager.

A definite construction schedule has yet to be established.

Stay tuned.